



# The ENVIRONMENTAL BULLETIN *from the Savannah River Site*

## Nation's first closure of high-level waste tank

Workers at the Savannah River Site (SRS) began in late April closing a now-empty, high-level liquid radioactive waste tank, the first closure of this nature in the nation. Aggressive cleanup of the Cold War's legacy and finding lasting solutions for disposal of nuclear waste are among top priorities for the Secretary of Energy.

Closure began when workers started pouring a cement-like substance, called grout, into the million-gallon tank in F Tank Farm. The grout will harden, safely incorporating any residual radioactivity in the tank. This initiative establishes a precedent for high-level waste tank closure.

Shortly after work on Tank 20 was under way, workers moved over to nearby Tank 17, which has been prepared for grouting. Both tanks were constructed in 1958 and first used in 1960. Field work to remove the tanks from service and ready them for grouting began in October 1996. Eventually, all 51 high-level liquid radioactive waste tanks on site will be closed. Closing these tanks helps prevent any possible environmental safety hazards.

In addition to the Westinghouse Savannah River Company (WSRC) cooperation on site, Department of Energy (DOE) and the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC) have worked together to establish strict closure requirements, which support all appropriate state regulations. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has provided applicable guidance for the closure project to date.

### *Removal action under way*

The Department of Energy began removal actions at four of the SRS Coal Pile Runoff Basins in May 1997. The coal pile runoff basins were constructed in 1981 to collect runoff from coal piles that are located near SRS's coal-fired power plants. Because the power plants at C, F, K, and P Areas have been shut down, the coal pile runoff basins are no longer needed.

These actions involve removing the coal-laden sediments and backfilling the basins with clean soil; followed by grading and seeding. These actions will remove the source of contamination and protect the groundwater. In addition, since the four basins are similar, DOE can streamline the remedial process by using the same technique for each basin.

These planned actions were discussed at a public meeting held at the Augusta Sheraton Hotel on February 27, 1997. A Removal Site Evaluation Report, completed under the Comprehen-

See "Removal," page 2

### *In this issue ...*

NEPA actions affecting SRS  
Page 2

Corrected version of Vol. 8, No. 11  
Page 3

## *Wetland Mitigation Bank Program EA*

DOE has determined that an Environmental Assessment (EA) will be prepared to analyze potential environmental consequences associated with implementation of a Wetland Mitigation Bank Program at SRS.

The proposed action would include both the general mitigation (i.e., restoration, enhancement or preservation) of SRS wetlands and the management of the resulting site "banking" program. The proposed action is needed to support future actions or projects at SRS, which require wetland mitigation or compensation.

The proposed action is embodied in an interagency Memorandum of Agreement between SCDHEC, DOE Savannah River Operations Office and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, and South Carolina Department of Natural Resources. Pursuant to DOE National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations, both the implementation of a wetland mitigation bank and wetland restoration activities require the

See "Wetland," page 2

# Current NEPA actions affecting SRS

## Document

## Status

Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (DOE/EIS-0026-52)

Final Supplemental EIS is scheduled for August 1997 and the ROD is scheduled for September 1997.

Rocky Flats Plutonium Residues and Scrub Alloy (DOE/EIS-0277)

The draft EIS is expected in late June 1997 with the final issued October 1997.

Shutdown of River Water System at SRS (DOE/EIS-0268)

The final EIS was issued May 16, 1997. The Record of Decision is scheduled for June 1997.

Accelerator for Production of Tritium (DOE/EIS-0270)

Preparation of the draft EIS continues with a proposed issue date of December 1997.

Tritium Extraction Facility (DOE/EIS-0271)

Preparation of draft EIS to begin in July 1997. Publication of draft EIS is projected for March 1998. The Final EIS and ROD are scheduled for September and October 1998 respectively.

DOE Waste Management (DOE/EIS-0200)

The Final PEIS was issued in May 1997.

SRS Spent Nuclear Fuel (DOE/EIS-0299)

Preparation of the draft EIS is progressing with a publication date in July 1997. Publication of Final EIS and ROD are scheduled for November and December respectively.

SRS Waste Management (DOE/EIS-0217)

The second ROD for the EIS was issued May 19, 1997 (62 FR 27241).

Surplus Plutonium Disposition (DOE/EIS-0000)

The Notice of Intent was issued May 22, 1997 (62 FR 28009). A public scoping meeting will be held June 19, 1997, at the North Augusta Community Center.

Wetland Mitigation Bank Program (DOE/EA-1205)

Preparation of the draft EA is progressing with a proposed issue date of late July 1997.

### *continued from page 1 "Removal"*

sive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), details how these removal actions are being completed and is available for public review at the following locations: the DOE Public Reading Room, Gregg-Graniteville Library, Univ. of South Carolina-Aiken, S.C.; the Thomas Cooper Library, Government Documents Dept., USC-Columbia, S.C.; the Asa H. Gordon Library, Savannah State University, Savannah, Ga.; the Reese Library, Augusta State University, Augusta, Ga.

Or, the document is available via Internet on the SRS Home Page "What's New" (<http://www.srs.gov>)

Comments or questions may be directed to:

Mary A. Flora, Public Involvement  
Westinghouse Savannah River Company  
Building 730-2B  
Aiken, S.C. 29808  
(803) 952-6852 or 1-800-249-8155  
[mary.flora@srs.gov](mailto:mary.flora@srs.gov)

### *continued from page 1 "Wetland"*

preparation of an EA.

A notification of DOE's intent to prepare this EA was sent to the states of South Carolina and Georgia on April 10, 1997. If you wish to request a copy of the draft EA when it becomes available, contact:

A.R. Grainger  
Savannah River NEPA Compliance Officer  
U.S. Department of Energy  
Savannah River Operations Office  
Building 773-42A, Rm. 212  
Aiken, S.C. 29802.

Or, send an E-mail message to "[nepa@srs.gov](mailto:nepa@srs.gov)."  
Fax/telephone: 1 (800) 881-7292



# Surplus plutonium disposition EIS Notice of Intent (NOI)

The Department of Energy has announced its intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on the disposition of United States weapons-usable surplus plutonium (62 FR 28009, May 22, 1997). This EIS will be based on the Storage and Disposition of Weapons-Usable Fissile Materials Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (DOE/EIS-0229), issued in December 1996, and the associated Record of Decision (ROD) (62 FR 3014, issued on January 14, 1997).

As stated in the NOI, the EIS will examine reasonable alternatives and potential environmental impacts for the proposed siting, construction, and operation of three types of facilities for plutonium disposition.

First is the facility to disassemble and convert pits (a nuclear weapons component) into plutonium oxide suitable for disposition. The second facility would immobilize surplus plutonium in a glass or ceramic form for disposition in a geologic repository pursuant to the Nuclear Waste Policy Act. The third facility would fabricate plutonium oxide into mixed oxide (MOX) fuel. The EIS will also discuss the decommissioning and decontamination (D&D) of the three facilities. Various combinations of facility locations will be analyzed including Hanford, Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory, Pantex, and SRS.

Comments to the proposed scope of the Surplus Plutonium Disposition EIS are invited from the public. Public scoping meetings will be held near each site that may be affected by the pro-

posed action. The interactive public scoping meeting for SRS will be held from 1-4 p.m., and 6-9 p.m., on June 19, 1997, at the North Augusta Community Center, 495 Brookside Avenue, North Augusta, S.C. 29841.

The comment period will close July 18, 1997. Comments and questions concerning the plutonium disposition program can be submitted by calling or faxing them to the toll free number 1 (800) 820-5156, or by mailing them to Bert Stevenson, NEPA Compliance Officer, Office of Fissile Materials Disposition, U.S. Department of Energy, P.O. Box 23786, Washington, D.C. 20026-3786.



## Waste Management Environmental Impact Statement

DOE has announced decisions concerning certain activities to be undertaken and facilities to be constructed and operated to further implement the Moderate Treatment Configuration Alternative for mixed low-level radioactive waste and transuranic waste. These decisions are based on the Savannah River Site Waste Management Environmental Impact Statement (WMEIS) and are consistent with the completed negotiations between DOE and South Carolina.

In July 1995, DOE issued the SRS WMEIS (DOE/EIS-0217) to evaluate the potential environmental impacts and costs of storing, treating, and/or disposing of certain wastes at SRS. In an October 1995 ROD (60 FR 55249, October 30, 1995), DOE announced its intention to implement the Moderate Treatment Configuration Alternative, including continuation of existing activities and operation of existing facilities, waste recycling, operation of the Consolidated Incineration Facility, low-level radioactive waste volume reduction, and operation of a mobile soil sort facility.

The ROD also announced decisions regarding high and low-level radioactive, hazardous, transuranic and alpha low-level radioactive wastes, and some mixed (radioactive and hazardous) wastes. DOE stated that it would issue additional RODs on mixed low-level radioactive waste and transuranic waste, including mixed transuranic waste, after completing negotiations with South Carolina under the Federal Facility Compliance Act of 1992.

This ROD supplements the October 1995 ROD by announcing DOE's decision to take additional measures to further implement the Moderate Treatment Configuration Alternative for mixed low-level radioactive waste and transuranic waste. The measures are: Send elemental mercury and other mercury-contaminated low-level radioactive waste off site for treatment. Residuals will be returned to SRS; vitrify two additional wastes, uranium chromium solutions and waste site soils (spill soils), in the M Area Vendor Treatment Facility; construct and operate a containment building for the characterization, certification, decontamination, shredding, and macroencapsulation of mixed low-level ra-

dioactive waste, including glass, metal, organic, inorganic, and heterogeneous debris, bulk equipment, and lead wastes; construct and operate a transuranic waste characterization/certification facility to characterize, repackage, and certify alpha-contaminated low-level wastes and transuranic wastes.

These decisions are based on the SRS WMEIS and are consistent with the completed negotiations between DOE and South Carolina.

For further information regarding SRS waste management, write or call:

A.R. Grainger  
Savannah River NEPA Compliance Officer  
U.S. Department of Energy  
Savannah River Operations Office  
Building 773-42A, Rm. 212  
Aiken, S.C. 29802.  
Or, send an E-mail message to "nepa@srs.gov."  
Fax/telephone: 1 (800) 881-7292

### Corrected version of Environmental Bulletin Vol. 8, No. 11 (Due to equipment problems, last month's printed Vol. 8, No. 11 did not have final edits.)

The U.S. Department of Energy Savannah River Operations Office (DOE-SR) has requested from the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control a modification to volumes IV and V of the Savannah River Site's (SRS) 1992 Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) Part B Permit Renewal Application.

Volumes IV and V detail operations of the F and H areas

Hazardous Waste Management Facilities (HWMFs). The requested revisions include modifications that reflect the final surveyed locations of the observation well network. Boring logs for this network, as well as extraction and injection wells, are included.

The HWMFs, formerly known as the F and H areas seepage basins, were used from the 1950s to 1988 for disposal of waste water from the chemical separations facilities in F and H areas. They have been closed

per an approved RCRA closure plan. Groundwater remediation activities recently began at the F Area basins and are scheduled to begin this summer at the H Area basins.

More information, including the actual permit application, is available for review and copying at the DOE Public Reading Room located at the University of South Carolina-Aiken library.

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## The SRS Environmental Bulletin

For more information on this or other  
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